

**Does Anyone Smoke in Your Home?**



## Did you know?

- Tobacco smoke contains thousands of chemicals. Many are harmful and about 60 of them are known or suspected to cause cancer.
- Tobacco smoke in the air may harm your health—even if you don't smoke.
- Children who breathe other people's tobacco smoke are more likely to have:
  - Coughing and wheezing
  - Asthma
  - Chest infections
  - Glue ear
  - SIDS (also known as cot death).
- Adults who breathe other people's tobacco smoke are more likely to have:
  - Chest complaints
  - Lung cancer
  - Heart disease.
- Children and adults who breathe other people's tobacco smoke are more likely to catch meningococcal disease.

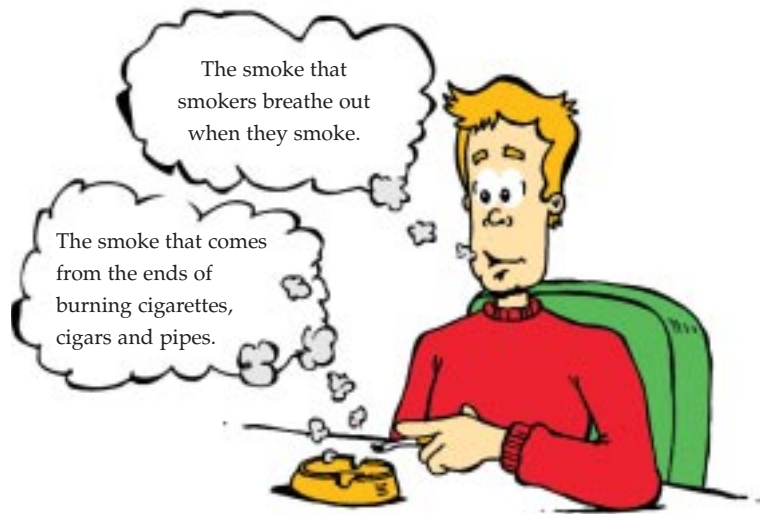
Tobacco smoke is a major cause of air pollution in the home. Breathing other people's tobacco smoke may harm your health—even if you don't smoke.

This booklet gives information on what you need to know and actions you can take to protect your family's health.



## What is released into the air when people smoke?

When people smoke, two different types of tobacco smoke are released into the air.



This mixture of tobacco smoke and air contains thousands of chemicals including:

- **Nicotine**—an addictive drug that encourages people to smoke.
- **Carbon monoxide**—a poisonous gas that takes the place of oxygen in the blood.
- **Chemicals that cause cancer**—such as benzene.

This smoke has a number of different names, including passive smoke, second-hand smoke and tobacco smoke pollution. The technical name is environmental tobacco smoke, which is often shortened to ETS.

## What is passive smoking?

When someone smokes cigarettes, a pipe or cigar inside your home, everyone in the same room breathes their tobacco smoke. Breathing another person's tobacco smoke is called **passive smoking**.

Babies and young children can breathe particularly high levels of tobacco smoke when they are being held by someone who is smoking.

When a pregnant woman breathes another person's tobacco smoke, her baby may also be affected.

Smokers aren't the only people who get serious health effects from tobacco smoke. Non-smokers may get them too!



## Who is affected by passive smoking?

Anyone may be affected by passive smoking. However some people are more likely to be affected than others.

Those who are most likely to be affected include:

- Babies
- Children
- People with asthma.

The following people may also be more easily affected than others:

- People with heart conditions
- People with lung diseases (other than asthma).



## What about passive smoking in the car?

Passive smoking in the car may also be harmful to your health.

As the inside of a car is fairly small, tobacco smoke inside the car is usually more concentrated than it is in the home.



## How can passive smoking affect your health?

- Tobacco smoke can irritate your eyes, nose and throat.
- Tobacco smoke can also irritate the lungs, which may lead to coughing, excess phlegm ('flem'), chest discomfort, and chest infections. It may also make you short of breath.
- Passive smoking may cause **lung cancer**.
- Passive smoking increases the risk of **heart disease**.
- Passive smoking may worsen certain health conditions:
  - If you have asthma, you may get asthma attacks more often and your asthma attacks may be worse.
- Passive smoking also increases the risk of catching **meningococcal disease**.

## What is meningococcal disease?

Meningococcal disease is a rare but very serious illness. It can infect the tissue that covers the brain, causing a condition called meningitis. It can also cause blood poisoning and spread infection to many different parts of the body.

Meningococcal disease can occur at any age. However, babies and children aged less than 5 years, and teenagers and young adults aged 15 to 24 years are most at risk.

## How can passive smoking affect children?

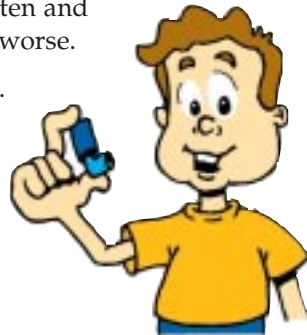
Children are very sensitive to tobacco smoke and passive smoking. They breathe more air (and smoke) in relation to their body weight than adults. Also, their lungs are still developing while they are growing in height—that is until their late teenage years. Damage to their developing lungs may have long-term effects.

Children who breathe other people's tobacco smoke are more likely to have:

- A sore throat and eyes.
- Coughing, wheezing, and excess phlegm.
- Reduced lung function (weaker lungs).

They are also more likely to:

- Develop glue ear (a build-up of fluid in the ear)— one of the most common reasons for children to go to hospital for an operation.
- Develop asthma.
- Have asthma attacks more often and have asthma attacks that are worse.
- Catch meningococcal disease.



## Babies and Very Young Children

Children are particularly sensitive to tobacco smoke during the first years of life—much more sensitive than older children or adults. This is partly due to their small body weight and their under-developed lungs and immune system.

Babies and young children who breathe other people's tobacco smoke are also more likely to:

- Have chest infections, such as croup, bronchiolitis, bronchitis and pneumonia.
- Die from cot death (also known as Sudden Infant Death Syndrome or SIDS).



## Smoking-Related Injuries in the Home

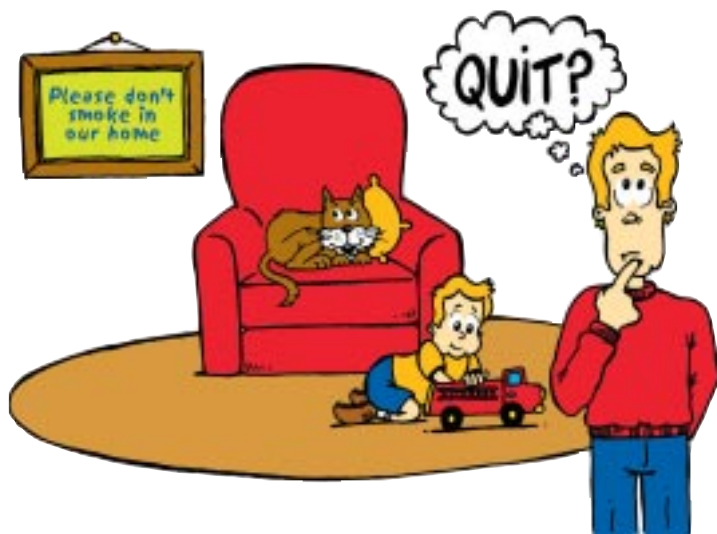
Children can also be burned, poisoned or injured by cigarettes, cigars, tobacco, matches or lighters.

Children under 4 years of age are most often affected.

## What can you do to protect your family's health?

### DOs

- ✓ Make your home smoke free.
- ✓ If you are a smoker, think about giving up.
- ✓ If you choose to smoke, make sure you smoke outside.
- ✓ Encourage your family and friends to quit smoking.
- ✓ Ask members of your family or visitors to go outside while they smoke.
- ✓ Use 'No Smoking' signs, stickers and buttons around your home.
- ✓ Protect your family from tobacco smoke in the car and other places.



### DON'Ts

- ✗ If you choose to smoke, don't smoke inside your home.
- ✗ Don't let other people smoke in your home, including baby sitters and others who may care for your children.
- ✗ Don't smoke around other people, especially those who are particularly at risk from passive smoking. This includes children, particularly babies and toddlers, and people with asthma or heart disease.
- ✗ Don't smoke around pregnant women.
- ✗ Don't smoke in the car.

### What else do you need to know about air pollution in the home?

Your health may also be affected by other sources of indoor air pollution such as wood smoke, kerosene and unflued gas heaters, moulds, dust mites, etc.

Other booklets in the *Health and Safety in the Home* series deal with other sources of air pollution in the home. For further information on the series, contact the Environmental Health Unit, Department of Human Services —see over the page for contact details.

## Where can you get more information?

### About advice on how to stop smoking

Call the Quitline on 131 848 or [www.quit.org.au/](http://www.quit.org.au/)

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### About your personal health

Contact your family doctor.

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### About asthma

Contact Asthma Victoria on 1800 645 130 or [www.asthma.org.au](http://www.asthma.org.au)

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### About the health effects of environmental tobacco smoke

Contact the Environmental Health Unit of the  
Department of Human Services on 9637 4156.

This publication is also available at the Internet address  
<http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/phd/environmental/>

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This booklet was prepared by  
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